

# Irish Muralists, The Bogside Artists, Renovate One of their Famous Murals

/EINPresswire.com/ The [Bogside Artists](#) begin renovation their famous [murals](#) in Derry with no funding from their local council.

The Bogside Artists, Tom Kelly, William Kelly and Kevin Hasson are highly regarded all over the world and known to countless thousands of people. They have travelled extensively and shown their work from China to Australia and Austria. They were last year given the Joseph Beuys/Richard Demarco lifetime achievement award and are very firm friends with Nobel Laureate John Hume and revered playwright Brian Friel who have been among their staunchest supporters.

Last year they painted a mural for the European City of Culture, Maribor, Slovenia, in support of Tibet that was unveiled by the Dalai Lama. In a recent visit to Derry the Dalai Lama met with them again. A mural they did in Vordernberg Austria was unveiled by the Duke and Duchess of Montrose who had been flown in especially for the occasion.



The Soldier Mural of the Bogside.

Last week the artists finished restoring The Soldier mural, one of twelve such murals depicting The Troubles that make up The People's Gallery of the Bogside that is visited by many thousands of people each year. The Soldier mural refers to "Operation Motorman". Once black and white it is now a strident blue. Explained the artists' [spokesman](#) Tom Kelly: "The cold blue is to underline what we understand to be the true nature of violence. It is brutal, heartless, Godless and inhuman in its total indifference to self or other. There is nothing glorious or exciting about violence. Nothing in it at all but madness. That is what we set out to paint."

On July 31st 1972 at 4am in the morning, a massive contingent of British troops supported by tanks and armored cars stormed over the barricades of the Bogside and into the Creggan area of the nationalist part of the city. "Operation Motorman", as it was called, involved thousands of soldiers, armored vehicles, Centurion tanks and bulldozers. Its purpose was to restore state

control to the 'no-go' areas of the Bogside and Creggan. It was the biggest mobilization of troops seen in Ireland since World War 11. In his memoirs, the then Prime Minister, Edward Heath revealed that he had ordered naval ships at the mouth of the River Foyle that runs through the city to bombard Derry should the troops meet with any resistance. He also had RAF planes on standby.

The artists responded to the event in the late nineties by painting a mural. In April of this year the huge painting clearly needed restoring along with the rest and the artists approached their local council for funding. Said Tom; "The mural is an anti-war mural and it shows a typical event from the period that many of us who lived in the Bogside or Creggan experienced at first hand. We approached the council in mid-June 2012 for funding in the hope that with the "City of Culture" year approaching they would see the urgency of the problem and respond swiftly before winter set in. In the event we were stalled until February 2013."

Thus the artists faced the winter early months of 2013 with still no funding on the horizon. In February at a council meeting to ratify their grant the wheels were to fall off, as they expected they would.

As this year's "UK City of Culture" party begins, incumbent Derry politicians choose to see the murals not as iconic works of art revered around the world but as reminders of a past both camps, namely the Unionists and Republican Sinn Fein as well as Westminster that is financing the year-long party to the tune of £20 million +, would like to forget. But, as with Belfast that resurrected the Titanic as a major tourist draw, "leaving the past behind" may not in reality be what any of them have in mind. Indeed, the Free Derry Museum situated in the Bogside has recently been given massive funding for extensive rebuilding while Sinn Fein's large investment in tourism is common knowledge; and much money they make from it. How then explain their attitude to the murals that constitute such a powerful tourist draw and that boasts no less than four pages in the Lonely Planet?

"Simple," explained Tom, "as we have made abundantly clear in our book *The People's Gallery* dealing with the murals. Sinn Fein played no part whatsoever in the creation of the Bogside's People's Gallery or any mural in it. They do not own it and see it as an obstacle to their plans of exclusive ownership of the area where they are situated. These murals are the soul of the Bogside and we will be restoring them come hell or high water. This is OUR story. We lived it and breathed it. We suffered for it, in it and by it. It stays. It speaks to anybody who has eyes. It is honored world wide as are we who created it; and it is art, first and foremost, standing for what all true art must stand for... democracy and Freedom of Speech."

In February this year Sinn Fein councilors, in an unprecedented move, allied with the Unionist Party in a vote to stop the artists' grant for restoring the murals. One of the main reasons given was that they considered it unacceptable that the artists had figured into their proposal money for lunch while they worked on their murals in the dead of winter.

The Bogside Artists have once again turned to the people for help to restore The People's Gallery to its former glory.

Find more from the links below.

<http://www.bogsideartists.com/blog/?p=1812>.

Or

<http://www.gofundme.com/thebogsideartists>

#### About The Bogside Artists

The Bogside Artists are a charity group and considered among the foremost political muralists in the world.

#### Media Contact:

Tom Kelly

The Bogside Artists

Ireland 353749108740

<http://www.bogsideartists.com>

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